

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Listing of Claims

1-3 (Canceled).

4. (New) A method of preparing a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly for use in a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, said bonded assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes from an initial temperature up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a first pressure, said initial temperature being the temperature of the polymer electrolyte membrane and the first and second gas diffusion electrodes before exposure of the positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes to said step of heating; and

(c) thereafter, once said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature while under said first pressure, applying to said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes a bonding pressure higher than said first pressure, wherein:

said first pressure is 1.962 to 7.358 MPa (20 to 75 kgf/cm²).

5. (New) A polymer electrolyte fuel cell which comprises (i) a bonded polymer electrolyte membrane/electrodes assembly comprising a polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes bonded to first and second sides of the membrane, respectively, and (ii) means for supplying a reducing agent and an oxidizing agent to said bonded assembly, wherein said bonded assembly is prepared by a method comprising the steps of:

(a) positioning said polymer electrolyte membrane between said first and second gas diffusion electrodes;

(b) heating said positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes from an initial temperature up to a bonding temperature while applying thereto a

first pressure, said initial temperature being the temperature of the polymer electrolyte membrane and the first and second gas diffusion electrodes before exposure of the positioned polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes to said step of heating; and

(c) thereafter, once said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes have been heated to said bonding temperature while under said first pressure, applying to said heated and pressed polymer electrolyte membrane and first and second gas diffusion electrodes a bonding pressure higher than said first pressure, wherein:

said first pressure is 1.962 to 7.358 MPa (20 to 75 kgf/cm²).

6. (New) The method as in claim 4, wherein said first pressure is applied during an entirety of step (b) and said bonding pressure is applied during an entirety of step (c).